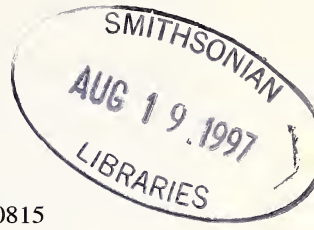


**CONTRIBUTIONS IN HONOR OF
LAWRENCE HUBERT ROLSTON**

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His career in entomology had a modest beginning, and it ended without fanfare when he retired on 1 October 1994. Yet, the forty-two years between beginning and end are filled with scientific achievements. Taxonomist, applied entomologist, researcher, educator—he is an uncommon man who has enjoyed an uncommon career.

Beautiful West Virginia is the perfect habitat for a naturalist. Appropriately, it was in the small city of Parkersburg, on April 14, 1922, that a future student of the life sciences was born to Forrest and Edna Richardson Rolston. The oldest of five children, his given names are Lawrence Hubert, but his friends and colleagues know him as L. H. or “Larry” Rolston.

His love of nature began with his earliest memories of growing up surrounded by a countryside that offered a fascinating variety of flora and fauna, precipitous hills to climb, and sparkling streams for fishing and swimming. With fondness, Rolston recalls the years he spent on the hill farm of his grandparents, and he is quick to note that the harsh winters and hard work were more than offset by the warm intimacy of close-knit family farm life. He considers his rural upbringing one of his greatest blessings.

After receiving his early education in the public school system in Wood County, West Virginia, Rolston moved to Virginia to seek employment. He worked as an apprentice toolmaker in the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company. This proved to be a dull and uninspiring job for a young man who had never before been confined to an urbanized, industrial environment. He was dutifully performing his toolmaker tasks when Pearl Harbor was bombed, and he waited only a few months before enlisting in the Air Force. He served from September, 1942, until December, 1945. His military career took him to the European theater of war, primarily England, France, and Germany.

As a World War II veteran, Rolston enrolled in Marietta College in Ohio with the intention of studying mechanical engineering. Although he is the type to persevere, he soon found engineering classes as boring as toolmaking, and he was not enthusiastic about spending his life in a profession he did not enjoy.

A major turning point occurred when he chose a zoology course to fulfill part of the science requirement of Marietta College. Not only did he find the class fascinating, but it was taught by a man who had a profound influence on the young veteran. Professor Harla Ray Eggleston was an excellent and dedicated teacher, and a man to be emulated. The Harvard graduate convinced Rolston that his future was in some aspect of zoology.

As an undergraduate, Rolston worked for several summers at the Washington County Experiment Truck Farm for C. R. Neiswander, Chairman of the Department

of Entomology at the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station. While there, he became intrigued with insects, and he credits Neiswander with enlightening him to the fact that one could actually make a living in entomology. His future finally began to focus.

At Marietta College, he distinguished himself by being inducted into Beta Beta Beta and Phi Beta Kappa, and by graduating cum laude with a BA degree in 1949. He began graduate work at Ohio State University where he received a master's degree in 1950 and a doctorate in 1955. While there he was selected for membership in Gamma Sigma Delta and Sigma Xi.

A seemingly ordinary career began in 1952 when he was hired by the University of Arkansas as an applied entomologist. Surprisingly, one of his first assignments was to resurrect the entomological museum which consisted of a few specimen cabinets and many Schmidt boxes which had been stuffed into a storage room. This discouraging task proved to be remarkably significant for Rolston since it marked the beginning of what would become a long and distinguished taxonomic career.

While immersed in organizing and re-establishing the museum, he pioneered research on the southwestern corn borer which was severely damaging crops in Arkansas. Rolston's research determined that by planting corn early, farmers could avoid much of the damage done by the second generation of corn borer larvae. This was of tremendous benefit to the farmers. His corn borer research also provided data for his thesis and dissertation topics.

Although Arkansas farmers were extremely pleased, Larry Rolston, as usual, was unassuming about the importance of his research. A short incident involving his father may be an indication that his lack of egotism is a genetic trait. Rolston remembers taking his dad on a tour of test plots to view his work on the corn borer. After seeing the little pest and hearing the basics of the ongoing research, the pragmatic and candid Forrest Rolston commented: "Well, if somebody wants to pay you for doing this, I suppose it's all right." This remark was inoffensive since it had long been understood between the two that the elder Rolston did not give compliments easily, and the younger Rolston did not expect any.

In 1955, he moved back to the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station to again work for C. R. Neiswander. His assignment there was also on corn insects.

Offered a position at the University of Arkansas which was professionally more interesting and rewarding, Larry Rolston moved back to Fayetteville in 1957. The next nine years proved to be busy and stimulating. Once again he found himself wearing two hats: he curated the museum, and he also worked on vegetables, rice and stored grain. In particular, he did research on Grape Colaspis, an insect that was crippling rice production. His intensive research on the problem revealed that damage could be reduced or avoided if the rice seeds, not the rice plants, were treated with insecticides. This was an economic blessing for the rice industry, and a gratifying research accomplishment for Rolston.

Although he liked the Fayetteville area, ranking it second only to Parkersburg in natural beauty, he felt it was time to look for new professional horizons. He left the University of Arkansas in 1966 to accept a position with Texas A&M University for an assignment in the Dominican Republic on an AID project.

His general objectives and assigned duties were to guide the development of a functional department of plant protection. Specifically, he was to initiate or improve

extension, research, and regulatory activities essential to plant protection on a national scale, and also to eliminate unrelated activities. When he arrived in Santo Domingo, he found a politically corrupt Dominican Republic government which had staffed the department with inefficient and generally incompetent workers who were untrained, disinterested, and using antiquated equipment. Despite his best efforts, many of the problems were insurmountable, and Rolston was never able to satisfactorily accomplish his goals.

A bright spot in this tour of duty, however, involved his taxonomic work. Seeing a need for systematic services within the divisions of entomology and phytopathology, Rolston wrote a proposal for a national diagnostic center. Grants were secured, partially on the basis of this proposal, and the foundation for an outstanding insect collection in the West Indies was begun. J. C. Schaffner of Texas A&M University is credited with being a key figure in this endeavor since he channeled specimens to appropriate specialists for identification, and returned the named specimens to the San Cristobal Center. His generous efforts also helped to sharply focus Rolston's interest in taxonomic work. Several thousand specimens were collected for this project—mostly by Larry Rolston, but many by Schaffner. Rolston notes that his service in the Dominican Republic was an interesting entomological experience, and it also provided an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the AID program. His end of tour report did not gladden the hearts of the AID administrators in Washington, D.C.

In addition to the Dominican Republic, his career has taken him to many parts of the world: the Philippines, Japan, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Surinam, Panama, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico and Venezuela.

Rolston observes that a side benefit from his tour of duty in the Dominican Republic was that it prepared him for living and working in Louisiana. An offer from L. D. Newsom, Head of the Department of Entomology at Louisiana State University, brought him to Baton Rouge in 1968. Newsom appointed Rolston to the position as a full professor.

At LSU, he began his applied assignment on vegetable insects. This continued until the sweet potato entomologist, unfortunately, died. This left a vacancy which Rolston was appointed to fill while continuing to work on vegetables. He particularly enjoyed working with the sweet potato growers, but found that the industry was in trouble and was having difficulty competing with North Carolina growers. In 1978 he began attempts to breed a new variety, even though plant breeding was not his field. His new variety was released in 1987 by the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station. Being a history buff, Rolston named his new sweet potato "Beauregard," after the confederate general he so admires. The new potato was exceptionally successful. Mike Cannon, horticulturist with the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, and a team contributor to Beauregard's development, predicted it had the potential to "revolutionize the sweet potato industry." He was correct—Beauregard now accounts for approximately 90 percent of the crop in Louisiana as well as in Texas, Mississippi and Alabama. It is also grown in other sweet potato producing areas and has received international recognition for future production.

In addition to Cannon, Rolston recognizes Chris Clark, LSU plant pathologist, as contributing to the team effort in the development of Beauregard. He credits Teme Hernandez, professor of horticulture (now retired), for his invaluable assistance and collaboration.

Beauregard gave the sweet potato industry the boost it needed, and it brought prosperity to farmers who were struggling to keep the crop alive economically. To express their appreciation, they chose Larry Rolston to be Mr. Yam of the 43rd Yambilee Festival held in Opelousas, Louisiana in October, 1988. This is an honor bestowed on someone each year who has made a substantial advance in the progress and growth of the sweet potato industry. While this role was slightly out of character for one who usually shuns the spotlight, Rolston was deeply appreciative of the honor extended him by the farmers he holds in such high esteem.

Still enjoying the satisfaction of his meaningful contribution to the sweet potato industry, tragedy struck. In 1989, Rolston suffered a nearly fatal heart attack. Although he seemingly recovered and resumed his career, he suffered a second major coronary attack two years later and had to undergo triple bypass surgery. Even this did not stop the indomitable Rolston for long. Most people rest while suffering and recuperating; he worked on taxonomy at home while suffering and recuperating. His inherently willful nature helped him make the best of a bad situation.

While Rolston was making significant contributions in applied entomology, he was also progressing as a taxonomist. His taxonomic field is pentatomids (stinkbugs), and he has an international reputation for being one of the world's foremost experts on this family of bugs. He identifies specimens for many of the world's largest museums, and during his taxonomic career he has described more than a hundred new species which will bear his name forever as author of their scientific names. The importance of this realm of his work cannot be over-emphasized since many of the new species which he identifies from the neotropics could become extinct as habitats are destroyed. It is understandable that Rolston's colleagues jokingly refer to him as the "Godfather of Stinkbug Taxonomy."

A prolific publisher, Rolston is one of those rare scholars who has the ability to write well and lucidly to make the point intended. He has an impressive list of publications in his fields of applied research and taxonomy, and he is currently working with David Rider on a catalog of the pentatomids of the world.

Among his greatest professional pleasures are his interactions with the bright young scientists who are already helping to carry the torch he will relinquish upon his retirement. Those with whom he has enjoyed working and hopes he has helped or influenced to some degree are: Joseph Eger, entomologist with DowElanco, Tampa, Florida; David Rider, faculty member, Department of Entomology, North Dakota State University; E. G. Riley, Collection Manager, Entomology Museum, Texas A&M University; and Donald Thomas, with the USDA Subtropical Research Laboratory, Weslaco, Texas.

It seems appropriate at this point to consider Larry Rolston as a man. What sort of character is he? "Unique" is probably the best one-word description.

Those who know him well will agree that he is a paradox in many ways. His quiet, unobtrusive personality belies his intense reaction when occasion demands it. Although he appears to be reserved and passive, he will unhesitatingly speak out on important issues while others remain safely in the shadows. Honest and straightforward to the point of being blunt, he has been known to "rock a few boats" and "ruffle a few feathers." He will jump to the defense of whomever he believes is right—friend or foe, colleague or stranger—without fear of personal repercussions. Some would call him dogmatic and opinionated; others would describe him as de-

cisive and outspoken. Dignified and resolute, he has a natural demeanor which usually commands respect, but often intimidates the fainthearted.

This may make him seem formidable, but he is not. One can easily see that behind the austere facade there is a kind, generous, gentle man. His strength of character can be seen in his exceptional composure, and his air of calmness and imperturbability gives those in his presence a sense of peace and order.

An avid sports fan, voracious reader, connoisseur of food, and "borderline" gourmet chef, his interests, in general, are too numerous to mention. But he never tires of the wonders of nature and the beauty of the world. He is, indeed, unique, paradoxical, impressive and interesting in many ways.

His four children from his first marriage are successful in their own right: Col. David Rolston, U.S. Army, stationed at Fort Monroe, Virginia; Gordon Rolston, Senior Test Officer who works in the NASA space program in Houston; Carla (Rolston) Hebert, graduate of LSU and employed with the Louisiana Animal Breeder's Cooperative in Baton Rouge; and Clyde Rolston who holds degrees from LSU and Temple University, Philadelphia, and is an assistant professor of marketing at Belmont University, Nashville.

Rolston's record of career accomplishments speaks for itself—it would have to. He is much too unimpressed by his achievements to think that he deserves special credit or recognition. Yet, it is evident from the dedication of this volume in his honor that his colleagues consider his contributions to entomology as significant. There is no doubt that he will be deeply moved by this wonderful tribute.

After retiring, he will continue to live in Baton Rouge with his wife, Joyce Nelson Rolston, who bravely assumes full responsibility for his character analysis, and who compares his choice of career to Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken":

. . . Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Larry Rolston—an uncommon man who chose an uncommon road and enjoyed an uncommon career.

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